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December 27, 2005

Mr. John Tolley, Planning Director
Alaska DOT/PF
P. O. Box 196900
Anchorage, AK 99519-6900



Mr. Jeff Otteson, Deputy Commissioner
Alaska DOT/PF
3132 Channel Drive, Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-7898

Subject: Include in STIP Seward Highway Improvements
Girdwood to Anchorage

Dear Sirs:

On behalf of the more than six hundred members of Girdwood 2020, we urge you to include the Seward Highway improvements from Girdwood to Anchorage/Potter Marsh in the State Transportation Improvement Plan. Furthermore, we strongly advocate upgrading this segment to a four lane divided grade highway design.

This segment of the Seward Highway is the deadliest in the state, with a long history of horrible accidents. Regular users of this stretch of highway are all touched in some way by memories of accidents. The road has few places to pass and many areas with limited visibility. Other issues include fallen rocks, snow slides, humans or animals on limited shoulders, and insufficient parking and pullouts for scenic viewing and emergency use. These problems are aggravated by frequent high winds, blowing rain and snow, visitor use in the summer and large commercial vehicle traffic year round. When accidents occur, the road is often closed for hours, even as long as a full day, which creates a tremendous disruption. The road generates frustration and encourages dangerous behavior. As traffic volume on the highway continues to increase these problems will become magnified.

Traffic on the Seward Highway will continue to increase. Girdwood is part of the Municipality of Anchorage, and the location of its largest block of undeveloped land. The municipal lands are currently being prepared for new residential and recreational use. A new hotel and other development is being planned for Girdwood. Girdwood's importance to tourism is growing. The Kenai Peninsula is also growing and all traffic between Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula, whether freight or automobiles, must go between Anchorage and Girdwood. The road will experience growing traffic volume, with related problems.



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Now is the time to take a proactive stance to deal with the problems occurring on the Seward Highway. A four lane divided grade highway is vastly safer than a highway with three lane passing zones, and if designed correctly at the outset the incremental cost will be minimized.

Girdwood 2020 and its members strongly advocate inclusion of the Seward Highway Potter Marsh to Girdwood improvements in the State Transportation Improvement Plan, and we are adamant that these improvements should include design of a four lane divided grade highway.

Thank you for your consideration.

GIRDWOOD 2020



John Rense
Cochair



Diana Stone Livingston
Cochair

Copies to:

Mr. David Post, AK DOT/PF
State Rep. Mike Hawker
State Sen. Con Bunde
Anchorage Mayor Mark Begich
Anchorage Assembly Janice Shamberg
Anchorage Assembly Chris Birch
Girdwood Board of Supervisors